A Long Time Ago In . . . CHOP

NOV 11, 2020

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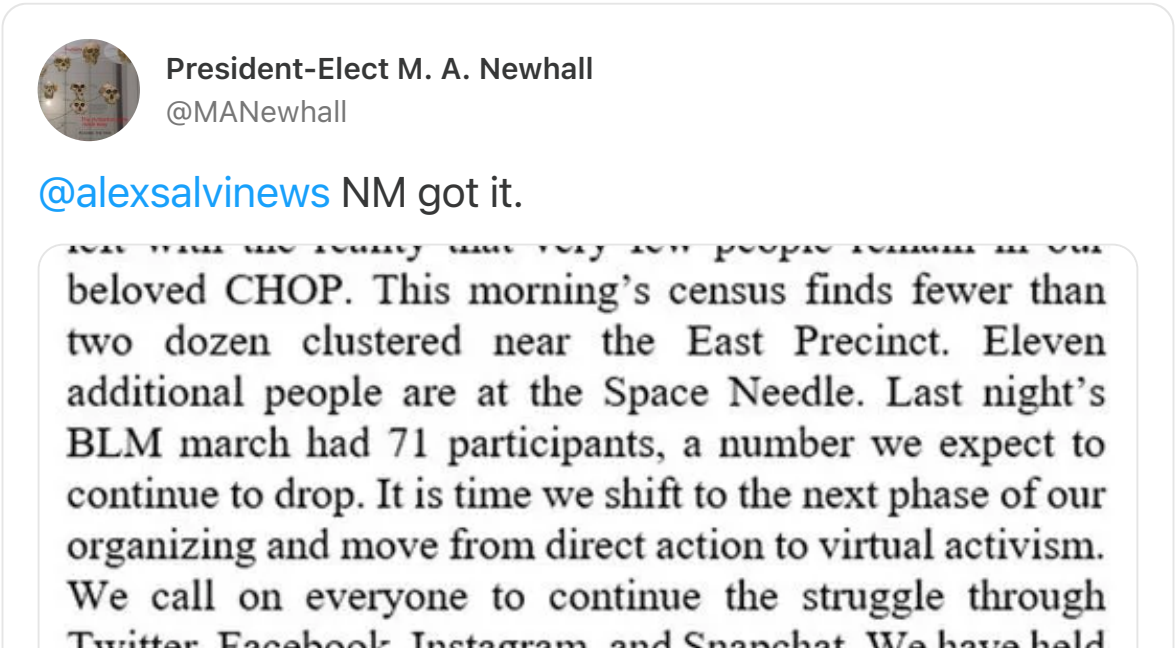
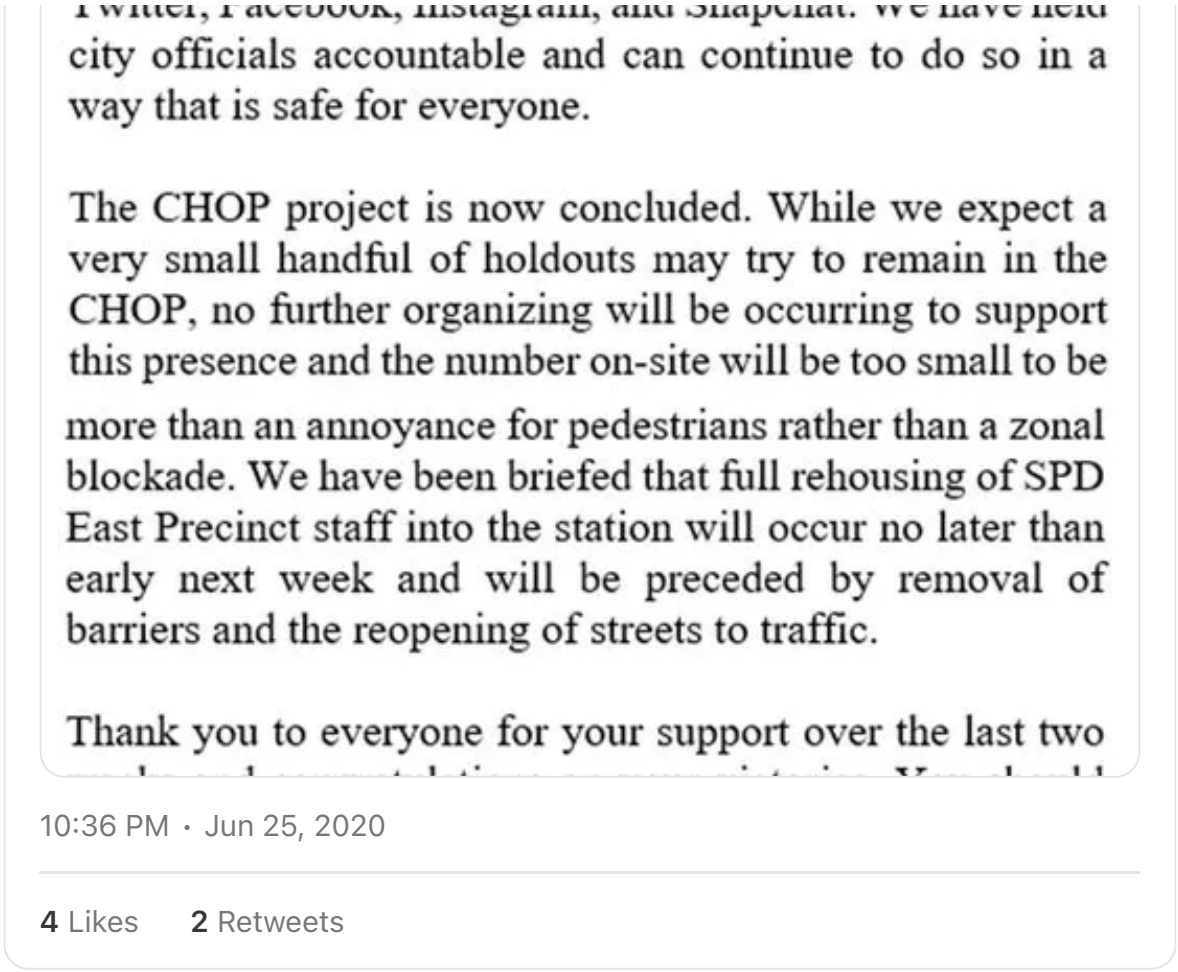
CHOP Knew

Do you remember, in the summer of 2020, such a long time ago, when CHOP (Capitol Hill Organized Protest) endorsed Joe Biden for president? Admittedly, this happened at a specific interval and only as a glimpse. The evidence appeared and was then deleted, though traces remain (see below). But the potential ironies are hard to ignore. After weeks of what was presented as the greatest anti-racist, anti-police, anti-carceral protest America had ever seen, leading to the centrepiece of the occupied district of Seattle (later to be known as CHAZ), the latter closed down with the flourish of what appeared to be an endorsement of Biden. Joseph Robinette Biden Jr., the guy who built the very carceral state the protestors spent the summer working to abolish. Was this a mere surface contradiction or a flash of deeper logical devastation to come?


President-Elect M. A. Newhall
@MANewhall
@alexsalvinews NM got it.
beloved CHOP. This morning's census finds fewer than two dozen clustered near the East Precinct. Eleven additional people are at the Space Needle. Last night's BLM march had 71 participants, a number we expect to continue to drop. It is time we shift to the next phase of our organizing and move from direct action to virtual activism. We call on everyone to continue the struggle through


Twitter, Facebook, Instagram, and Snapchat. We have held city officials accountable and can continue to do so in a way that is safe for everyone.

The CHOP project is now concluded. While we expect a very small handful of holdouts may try to remain in the CHOP, no further organizing will be occurring to support this presence and the number on-site will be too small to be more than an annoyance for pedestrians rather than a zonal blockade. We have been briefed that full rehousing of SPD East Precinct staff into the station will occur no later than early next week and will be preceded by removal of barriers and the reopening of streets to traffic.

Thank you to everyone for your support over the last two

10:36 PM · Jun 25, 2020

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CHOP's now semi-mythical endorsement was at the very least *a historical echo*, and returns differently in the ongoing aftermath of the 2020 election. During that summer moment of statue-felling and social media protest, the French Revolution was often evoked, and in particular Robespierre. The story of Robespierre contains its own lesson about abolitionist logics. Robespierre was an abolitionist (of the death penalty) until power was granted him. Before the Revolution, he was against the death penalty, and even wrote at the beginning of the Constituent Assembly of being against the death penalty *in general*. But as soon as it came to the case of the sovereign, the monarch Louis XVI, his position changed. The execution took place—including everything that followed which means not only the Terror—and abolition was postponed for two centuries.

It is impossible to say that the same laws of political amnesia will not be applied to the abolitionisms of the present. With a presidency of Joe Biden projected by a segment of

abolitionisms of the present. With a presidency of Joe Biden projected by a segment of 'news media' at the time of writing, the possibility of severe political relapse cannot be ignored—or rather, given the general situation, perhaps it can *only be ignored* (such is relapse as machinic political forgetting).

Biden is someone who can be directly associated with a substantial number of catastrophic and genocidal ideas and policies in the history of American politics. When Trump was figuring out how to rebuild the Twin Towers as Twin Trump Towers and creating posters to wrongfully convict the Central Park Five, Biden was busy being the legislative point-man for the invasion of Iraq and working out details of a Crime Bill that was a prime mover in the creation of the very prison industrial complex BLM would now do anything—except abolish Biden—to abolish. Anything but Trump, so the lesser-evilest jargon goes if really allowed to max out, especially a senile, stage 2 dementia, possible extortionist, segregationist, Sino-compromised, alleged rapist, alleged paedophile, instigator and supporter of the Iraq War who wrote the first version of the Patriot Act as well as the secret 2013 Memorandum of Understanding creating a loophole for Chinese companies to trade the shit out of native Tibetan territory, and helped design the Colour Revolutions in Europe whose model has now been imported into America itself to steal an election. Chomksy, of course, will wander in from retirement, tele-empathising with Biden's civilizational senility, making what is supposed to be a slam-dunk argument: that Trump's amazingly neglectful attitude to the facts of 'global warming' make him by definition an absolutely evil candidate who even Biden can't get close to. Let's ignore Biden, in other words, and work at getting rid of Trump, because Trump is in fact 'the worst criminal in history, undeniably'.

There is no doubt that Chomsky's argument is correct *from a certain angle*. However, the argument is made only per the assumption that tipping points in accelerating extinction have *not* already passed, and, therefore, that Trump is the contemporary pivot figure uniquely responsible for aeons of destruction to come. Chomsky's accusation relies on the idea that *we still have a chance*, and an extreme personalism to boot: Orange Man Bad is sole signatory for the holocaust to come. The problem is that

only a small amount of reading is needed to show that the crucial ecological damage indicated by Chomsky to be in the future is already in the past, probably somewhere around the time of the Bush-Clinton-Bush administration at the very latest. To take only one superficial example from a mass of data and relatively conclusive judgement, the title of Nathaniel Rich's book *The Decade We Could Have Stopped Climate Change* might be immediately assumed to be about the decade in which things could have been really changed, that is, the last decade, the decade which included the four years of Trump's first term. On reading the book, however, the decade in question turns out to be not the aughties (the 2010s) but the specific period going from 1979 to 1989 (the 1980s, in effect). In fact, as is fairly well-known, the rallying cry 'Exxon knew' takes us back even further:

> It is incontrovertibly true that senior employers at Exxon, and its predecessor, Humble Oil, like those at many other major oil and gas corporations, knew about the dangers of climate change at least as early as the 1950s and did nothing to reduce emissions.

Rich adds: 'Everyone knew—and we all still know.' One can easily find plentiful confirmation of this here:

> A little time with your favourite online search engine will take you to George Perkins Marsh sounding the alarm in 1847, Svente Arrhenius's relevant journal article in 1896, Richard Nixon's knowledge in 1969, and young versions of Al Gore, Carl Sagan, and James Hansen testifying before the United States Congress in the 1980s.

Or here, in Brad Johnson's 'A Timeline of Climate Science and Policy'. The point isn't that Chomsky is entirely wrong to announce Trump as the greatest criminal in history because of his environmental crimes, but that doing so opens up enormous, extremely radical questions about, for example, just what responsibility every single American president going back to the 1950s, including top-level senators and vice-presidents like Biden, might share in terms of this singular criminality, and whether it can be

like Biden, might share in terms of this singular criminality, and whether it can be usefully apportioned in this way at all. It would after all be quite easy to argue that by the time we reach 2016, the many decades in which we could have stopped climate change have already passed, and that Joe Biden happened to spend them legislatively enabling—with a degree of continuity unmatched by any other figure—the very national governance that most crucially ignored our doom.

Cornel West is entirely clear about who Biden is:

> Biden is still Biden. Let us be very clear about that. He's the architect of the largest prison system in the modern world and of a war that was a crime against humanity, killing millions of Iraqis.

Kanye West says the following about him:

> And Joe Biden? Like come on man, please. You know? Obama's special. Trump's special. We say Kanye West is special. America needs special people that lead. Bill Clinton? Special. Joe Biden's not special.

Lame Cherry writes thus:

> Biden is whistling through the graveyard hoping the lights will not come on to reveal what a political ghoul he is.

Perhaps what has to be reckoned with is that Trump's own specialness involves a degree of intuitive, symbolic genius and graft foreign to Bidenism's more common administrative grift. Informally speaking, Trump's administration may indeed be held responsible for atrocious environmental (mis)management. Yet, this is really not how Trumpism encourages us to *read*. The *symbolic content* of Trumpism mostly guides us to work against the image of governance that has come before, *even if Trump's own extra-governmental corruption is self-evident and relatively malignant*. The redress at depth we can offer to Chomsky's slam-dunk is that in some ways Trump simply arrives on the scene like the rest of us, a late-comer to the occlusion of accelerating extinction

that has guided much US policy for the last century. In a more ultimate sense, Trump is the last pragmatist when it comes to climate change, and not the poster child of an insane and frenzied denialism. He merely formalises what came before him, and shows it to us in a clearer light. Whether we like that or not, is hardly the point.

In other words, where Trump began by signing whole buildings, a kind of Duchamp transplanted to the property market of Manhattan and Atlantic City, he has ended by signing the failure of the West itself. What 'Trumpian' means, when we get down to it, is the countersigning of Western Metaphysics as an ecocidal hoax. Trump—not by conscious implementation but by unconscious 'under-writing'—comes to see the whole world as signable. In this way he surpasses not only Duchamp but Lucia Diego, the signer of #cavetwitter as thinkable 'content'.* Here's what else Trump has signed: *hate*. What 2016-2020 has allowed to be figured is a live-session with hate the likes of which we have perhaps not seen since Proust's analysis of the Dreyfus affair in *À la*

recherche du temps perdu. With Trump *in session*, we get to love to hate and we get to hate to love and we get to entertain the ultimate mirage: the possibility of hating without any love at all. Since pure hate is analytically delicious and intractable, and almost impossible to recover from, like life itself, Trump's innovation in hate will have to be seen as equally *artistic*. Nothing else, really, can explain the lethal tumult of the last four years.

The Cure Cannot Be Worse Than The Problem

When Kanye *announced* in 2020, he specifically described his decision as a decision to *walk* for president, a walking-not-a-running. This non-teleological approach to the presidential process (pointing to 2024, 2028, and beyond . . .) uncovered the outrageous assumption of a model that has now inwardly lost its truth along the way. That model is leftism as a counterfactual compensatory fantasy. While the 'radical

leftists' of CHOP were able to at least momentarily endorse Joe Biden, no such attitude was widespread towards Kanye, probably the greatest black genius of the last few decades. West's announcement to walk-not-run was itself of course *speculative*. 'Kanye West is running for president' was one of the key 'speculative statements' belonging to 2020 in the strong Hegelian sense: *spirit is bone*, *the cure cannot be worse than the problem*, *slavery is choice*, *Kanye West is running for president*. What Kanye said while 'walking', spiritually and speculatively, was always a way of saying more than any election was about to say.

Kanye's presence in the 'race' was not to be taken seriously by the left, not because of an imagined mental state or lack of serious plan, but because his very appearance reminded them too painfully of the fundamental truth of politics even now in late 2020: that in 2016 Donald Trump symbolically defeated—signed off on—the Sino-DNC-retro-academic-MSM-Marxian caliphate in improbable fashion. The lesson of '2016' was that the left had fucked up so badly that they would need a generation to wash the defensive fury out of their system—which nobody has, hence the impressive display of industrialised ressentimentalist fireworks for the last four years, an aborted mourning and extended plateau of hatred which will ongoingly provoke analysis. In anecdotal mode, Žižek has recounted how when asked to write a book on Trump and psychoanalysis, he demurred, giving the reason that what really needed analytic attention was the reaction to Trump and the failure to admit what had been at stake in the defeat—not Trump himself, but the 'resistance'. Whatever happens now, we still await that particular analysis.

The Repressed Memory of CHOP . . . Returns

When it came to CHOP's effaced support of 'my friend Joe', as Bernie Sanders calls him, to some extent all of that denied away affair had already happened. The French Penal Code of 1791, adopted during the French Revolution by the Constituent Assembly and influenced by the Enlightenment thinking of Cesare Beccaria and Montesquieu, made 32 crimes punishable by death. The 1994 Crime Bill in the United

States, also called for good reason 'the Biden Crime Bill', created 60 new death penalty offenses. Antifa may have been keen to scorch the Portland elk statue but they were less keen when it came to making a serious and public critique of the legislative point-man for the largest prison system in the world who may or may not be on the verge of being the president. In fact, in an election year in which one of the candidates happened to be the ex Senator Joe Biden, BLM chose not to use a single one of its official statements on its homepage to criticise his candidacy. Anything to get rid of Trump, as said. Including, presumably, two centuries of strategic oblivion and self-calumny. On Twitter John Legend talked about 'doing your reading'. Accurate reading and perception (the Google sponsored 'fact checking' now even added to the Wayback Machine internet archive) gets the last word, but not of the Biden Crime Bill and its effects.

On the contrary, in the psychological hell-hole of the first presidential debate in Cleveland on 29 September 2020, the emphasis was not on the actual history of legislative racism in America but on the performative gestures of the President, none of which will ever be enough, given that the function of their failure is to cover over the historical ironies just now briefly outlined. Here, in essence, is the uncanny valley between leftist critique and the media's manipulation of the addiction regimes of Trump hatred. Biden, the legislative insider who enabled what the abolitionist logic is directed against, voices for those concerned the gesture of radical critique ('critical race theory') targeting the real racist in the room, President Trump (a 'clown', according to Biden, the same word that Mary L. Trump happened to use for him in her then newly released book).

This is all described according to the figurative and poetic logic of contemporary politics as a new type of ferocious game. Not just simulation, but extinction-driven mutual code blanking. In some ways, Trump's wounded exasperation in that first debate can be understood only in terms of this matrix *vis á vis* racial history: he was intelligent enough to know he was the fall guy for what Biden was in the process of getting away with. Biden was the 'daddy' in that situation, aided by the Fox News

double agent liberal Chris Wallace, and Trump was not. Biden can't be touched or tampered with because of a civilizational incest taboo in politico-eugenic form: Biden, as the father of a nation he racially abused in plain sight, as if touching children on CSPAN during an awards ceremony, will forever be forgiven precisely because it is too painful to remember, and because his sibling happens to be extrovert and have a foul mouth, and besides, the brother's words have resembled a confession of the same.

The paradox here is that only 'Trump' might offer America a degree of complex resolution, longer analysis leaving room to truly know the symptom. What is always easier than taking on 'daddy' is blaming the other brother for his failure to verbally condemn (or, as now, concede). The Crime Bill has over the decades been more than costly, but a true confrontation of Biden on those terms would hurt the nation too much. Safety is preferred. What replaces true risk is the gotcha interpellation and demand structure (*you must condemn, you must concede*) designed to transfer decades of guilt (not *entirely* Biden's fault either, in the final analysis, to be sure) over to, literally, just one man, *Orange Man Bad*.

Stop it, said Chris Wallace, caught in the middle, when the President refused to stand the transference. The primal scene and its cues remain right on.

The immediate aftermath of that debate is therefore ongoing as a saturation mirage: Trump must still, even now, be made to say what he must be made to say, that racist groups must be condemned, and his failure to clearly make this condemnation is itself the racial tragedy of the American present, not the presence of Joe Biden as possible president. *Every woman adores a fascist*, wrote Plath. *What you want is another Master*, said Lacan. According to many, the choice of the 2020 election was the most mind-bending lesser-evilist hall of mirrors yet: a playoff between one fascist and another, or rather between one fascist (Trump) and one deeply flawed but well-intentioned man ('my friend Joe'). Another way of putting it is that America was always about to get four more years of Trump, or four more years of a Fascist Master (in sheep's clothing). CHOP and BLM want a master, and they will get one.

To Win or Lose

As we head into lawfare season over whether Biden can confirm the votes he seems according to a certain sector to have won, it may be said that a Biden victory can now only be inoperable at best. There is no such thing as a post-Trump moment. Trump will, short of assassination (but even then), continue as the main focus of an interpassive, delegated, objective hatred machine that is now all but indestructible in needing some kind of 'Trump' as an icon and avatar. This is why we have allowed him to guide arguments for these years, and ceded to the idea that modern media has now become more than what Godard called 'the poor cinema of the news'. As the libretto to John Adam's *Nixon in China* once put it, 'news has a kind of mystery'. The news we have now is the plasticity of what artificial formalisation makes possible. Since the spectacle of others hating or being wrong is even more addictive (and deliciously intractable) than hate itself, 'Trump' will survive. But if we want to understand the potential comedown and afterzone of the Trumpian, perhaps there really is no better guide than Proust. Everything Proust had to say about the Dreyfus affair and its replacement after a spell, when it seemed there would never be an end to it, by the Russian Ballet, applies here. Except that, when it comes to 'Donald Trump', the thing, the substance, our bargain with distraction at the end of a certain time—he himself may be the arrival of those dancers.

Notes

* This allows us to understand Warhol's beef with Trump for never buying his Trump Tower painting: Trump did not need such a painting, because he had already signed the tower itself as his own. Trump went on to contemplate Trump Twin Towers. Identikit architecture is world architecture.

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mifynse impossible Apr 2

i love this, a hidden classic imo

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